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March 25, 1975

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No 657

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Approved For Release 2007/03/07 : CIA-RDP79T00975A027500010042-0

Approved For Release 2007/03/07 : CIA-RDP79T00975A027500010042-0

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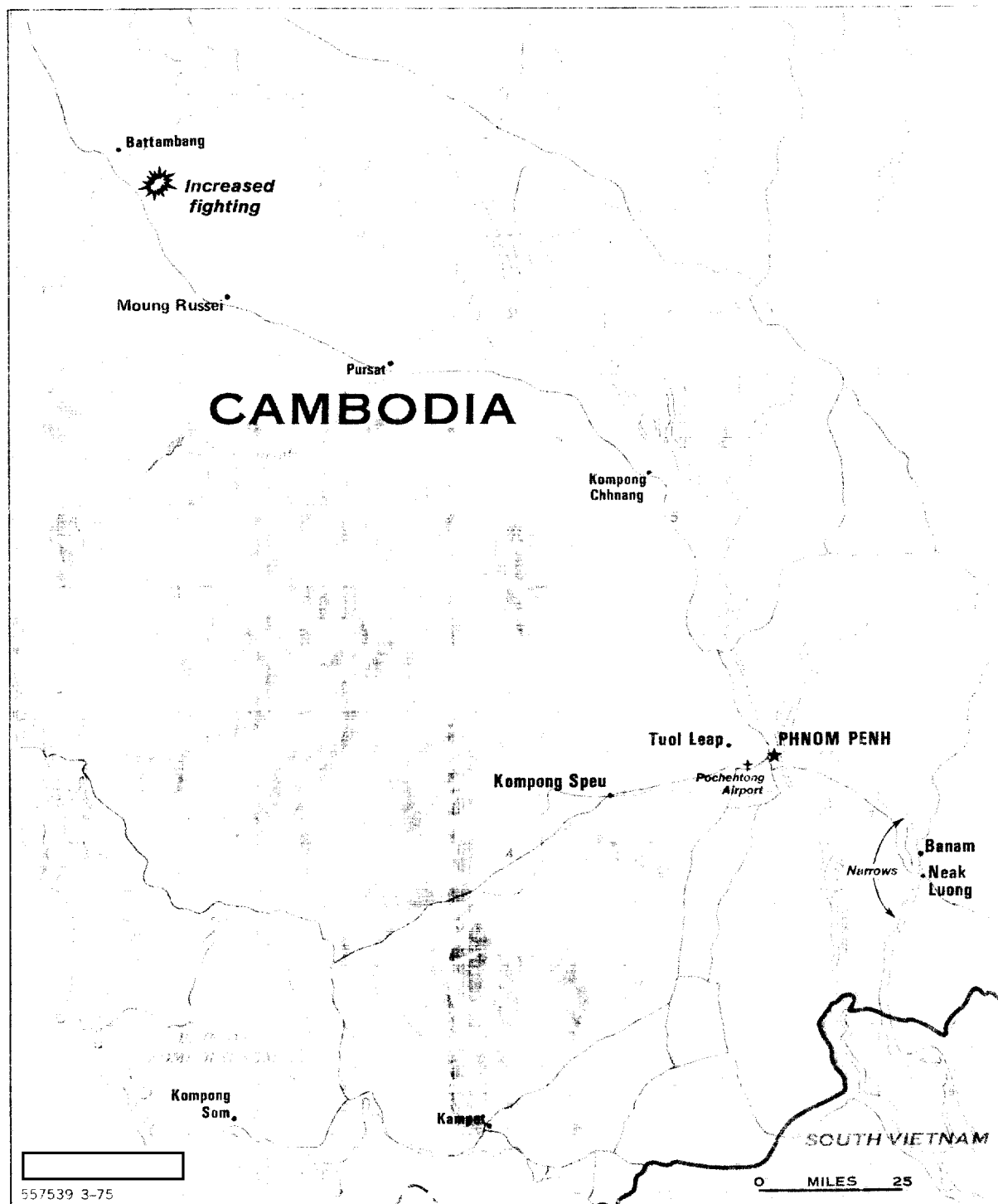
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CAMBODIA

The US airlift into Phnom Penh's Pochentong Airport proceeded without interruption yesterday, despite more communist rocket attacks. Rockets again fell near military facilities on the southeastern side of the airfield, where most airlift cargo is unloaded.

There is little prospect that the rocket fire will end soon. Government units near the "rocket belt" north-east of Tuol Leap are still marking time while task force elements attempt to regain positions south of Tuol Leap that were lost over the weekend. Other nearby communist units have also stepped up their attacks near Route 4, and the highway remains closed between Phnom Penh and the provincial capital of Kompong Speu.

[REDACTED]

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Government defenders at Banam and Neak Luong were hit by more shellings and ground probes yesterday, but continue to hold their ground. In the far northwest, however, insurgent forces are edging closer to Battambang City, and local government commanders are growing jittery over the possibility of attacks against the city and the nearby air force base. [REDACTED]

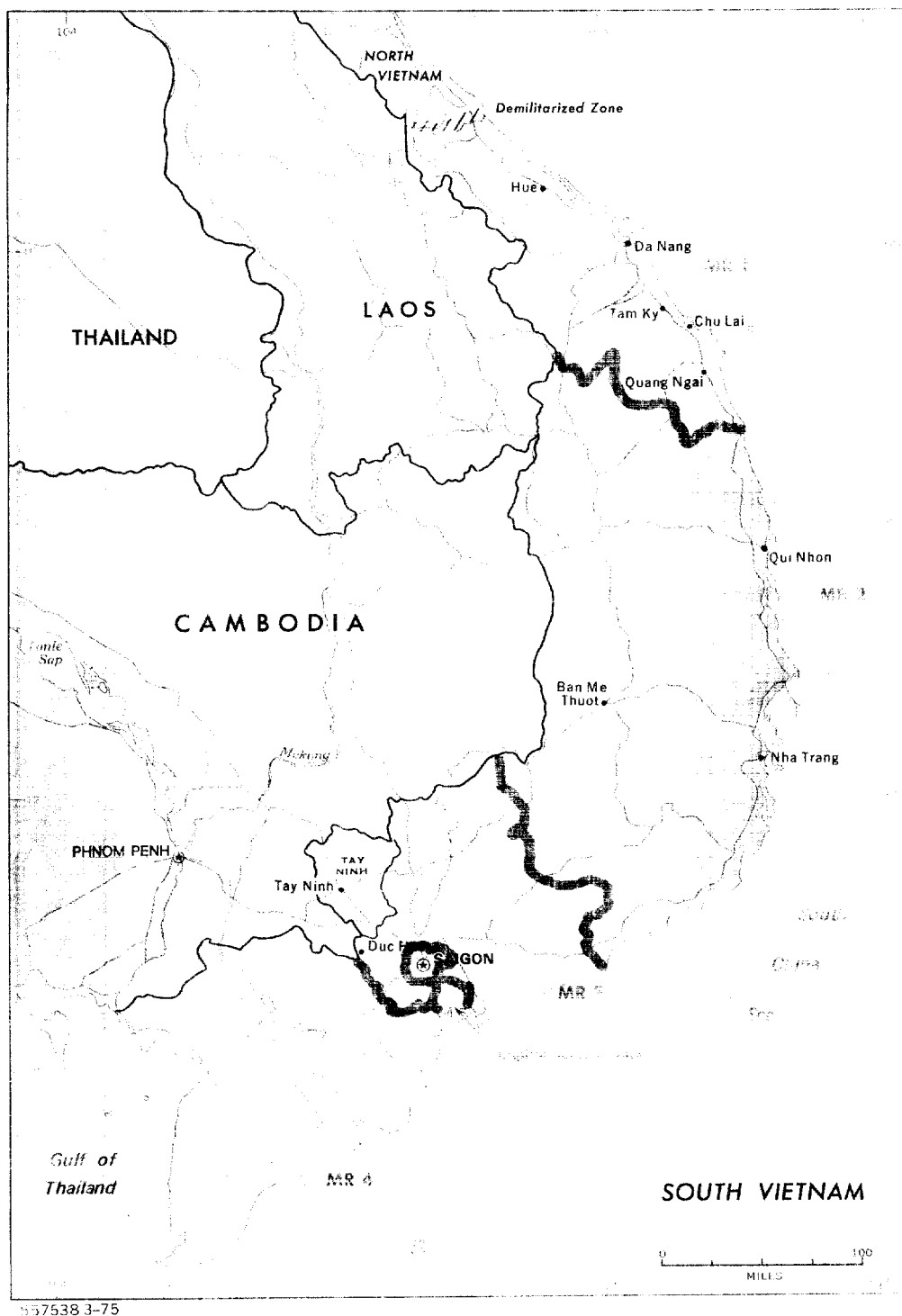
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SOUTH VIETNAM

Regrouping South Vietnamese forces has become as much a problem for Saigon as coping with communist attacks. Government commanders are trying to regain control of their units and organize them in defensive positions. Since the evacuation of the highlands began ten days ago, many of the country's territorial forces and some regular units have found themselves facing substantially superior enemy forces and have lost their will to fight.

With the evacuation of military units from Hue and Quang Ngai cities and the communist capture of Tam Ky, the only possibly defensible position in the northern provinces is Da Nang. The US embassy in Saigon has ordered that the evacuation of American personnel from Da Nang begin.

In the central provinces, government forces must regroup if they are to protect such coastal cities as Qui Nhon and Nha Trang. The South Vietnamese are trying to break communist roadblocks that are preventing remnants of government forces from reaching the coast.

[REDACTED] Yesterday, Saigon itself was put on more of a war footing. With the re-establishment of the Capital Military District, its new commander, General Nguyen Van Minh, controls a 15-mile circle of defenses around the city. Minh is a better commander of field forces than was his predecessor, Vice Admiral Cang.

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The transfer of combat units from one region to another will continue to complicate the planning of local commanders. The movement of the airborne division from the northern provinces to the Saigon area contributed significantly to the deterioration of the military situation in Military Region 1. [REDACTED]

The heaviest fighting continues to be concentrated south of Tay Ninh City, where control of the major highways is being contested. The fighting has resulted in heavy casualties to regular units on both sides, but no major territorial changes.

The government is having considerable difficulty marshaling resources to assist the masses of refugees converging on Da Nang and central coastal cities. The number in the Da Nang area is growing hourly by the tens of thousands and could reach a million. Centers have been set up in the open in Da Nang to try to cope with minimum needs. Plans are being made to evacuate as many as possible to points farther south to relieve the burden they impose on the defense of Da Nang. [REDACTED]

Adequate rice stocks exist in Saigon and other urban areas to accommodate large numbers of refugees. With roads closed in many areas and the population constantly shifting, getting food to where it is most needed will be difficult.

The communists are already issuing propaganda statements about the peaceful return of residents to Ban Me Thuot under their newly established administration. The communists will probably relocate many of the people trapped outside government lines to their home villages and towns now under communist control. [REDACTED]

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MIDDLE EAST

The future of US-Israeli relations appears to be Tel Aviv's principal preoccupation at the moment.

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The Israeli press reports that Tel Aviv will launch a major campaign in the US to explain its position to the American public. It speculates that Prime Minister Rabin or Foreign Minister Allon will ask to visit Washington to "clarify questions that might harm US-Israeli relations." Israel's ambassador to Washington cut short his stay in Tel Aviv and flew to New York yesterday to brief hurriedly assembled American Jewish leaders

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Rabin yesterday told a special session of the Knesset that cooperation with Washington remains a cornerstone of Israeli foreign policy. He added, however, that Israel must "clarify" its position on the collapse of the negotiations with Egypt. The Knesset, by a vote of 92 to 4, passed a resolution blaming Egypt for the "suspension" of the talks.

In Cairo, meanwhile, Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy yesterday reiterated at the opening session of the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting that Israeli "arrogance" was to blame for the lack of progress. He called for a concerted Arab effort to isolate Israel in the world community "like South Africa and Rhodesia."

In an initial Syrian reaction, Damascus radio, citing "official quarters," yesterday said that the convening of the Geneva conference as soon as possible is now the only alternative.

Soviet media reaction has been sparse and low-key. Pravda yesterday merely replayed excerpts of official US and Egyptian statements. Moscow's reticence probably

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indicates the Soviets have not yet sorted out the effects of the latest developments.

A commentary in Arabic broadcast by Radio Moscow alleged, "The time spent in seeking partial solutions was lost." It added that the US has the "necessary driving forces," by stopping "trans-Atlantic assistance," to keep Israel from making "unacceptable demands" in the negotiations. The commentary endorsed an early reconvening of the Geneva conference, maintaining that it "is capable of" achieving a solution. This idea was also included yesterday in the communiqué marking the end of French Prime Minister Chirac's visit to the USSR.

Egyptian and Israeli armed forces remain on alert.

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ITALY

The Italian Communist Party closed its national congress on March 23 by declaring that Communist participation in the government would not affect Italy's ties with the West. Public attention was diverted from the congress, however, by a growing controversy over the implications for Italy of recent events in Portugal.

In his closing remarks, Communist leader Berlinguer maintained that only a coalition including the Communists would have the "force and authority" to deal with Italy's problems. He asserted, moreover, that the Communists, if included in the government, would not "bring up" the subject of Italian withdrawal from NATO.

The meeting ended with unanimous endorsement of the Berlinguer line, although some differences surfaced in debate over the timing and implementation of his strategy. One influential leader urged the party to push harder for a government role, even though Berlinguer claims to be in "no hurry." Another party official put the main emphasis on forcing the Christian Democrats to give up many of their perquisites--particularly their hold on the public sector of the economy--in exchange for Communist support.

The Communists' positions on domestic issues were largely obscured, however, by the controversy that developed over the party's failure to condemn the events in Portugal that led to the banning of the Portuguese Christian Democratic Party. The timing of the Lisbon events could not have been worse for the Italian Communists. The Communists had hoped that the conciliatory tone of their congress would undercut Christian Democratic arguments against Communist participation in the government. Instead, the Christian Democrats seized on the Portuguese Communist Party's role in Lisbon to bolster their argument against any concessions to the Italian Communists.

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The Communists now are on the defensive, and in the closing sessions of the congress some speakers seemed to be cautiously favoring a more critical line toward the Portuguese Communists. Berlinguer, in his final remarks, showed his concern over the situation in Lisbon, and he may well decide to criticize the Portuguese government's action if the Christian Democrats are successful in making the issue a test of the Italian Communists' claim to be an independent national party.

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GREECE-TURKEY

The Greeks and Turks are again trading charges. Athens is protesting Turkish actions in Thrace and the Aegean while Ankara says the Greeks are illegally building up their military forces in the Aegean.

Greece claims the Turks last Wednesday fired on an unarmed Greek reconnaissance plane flying over Greek territory along the border in Thrace, but the Turks say the plane was on their side. The plane landed safely, despite minor damage.

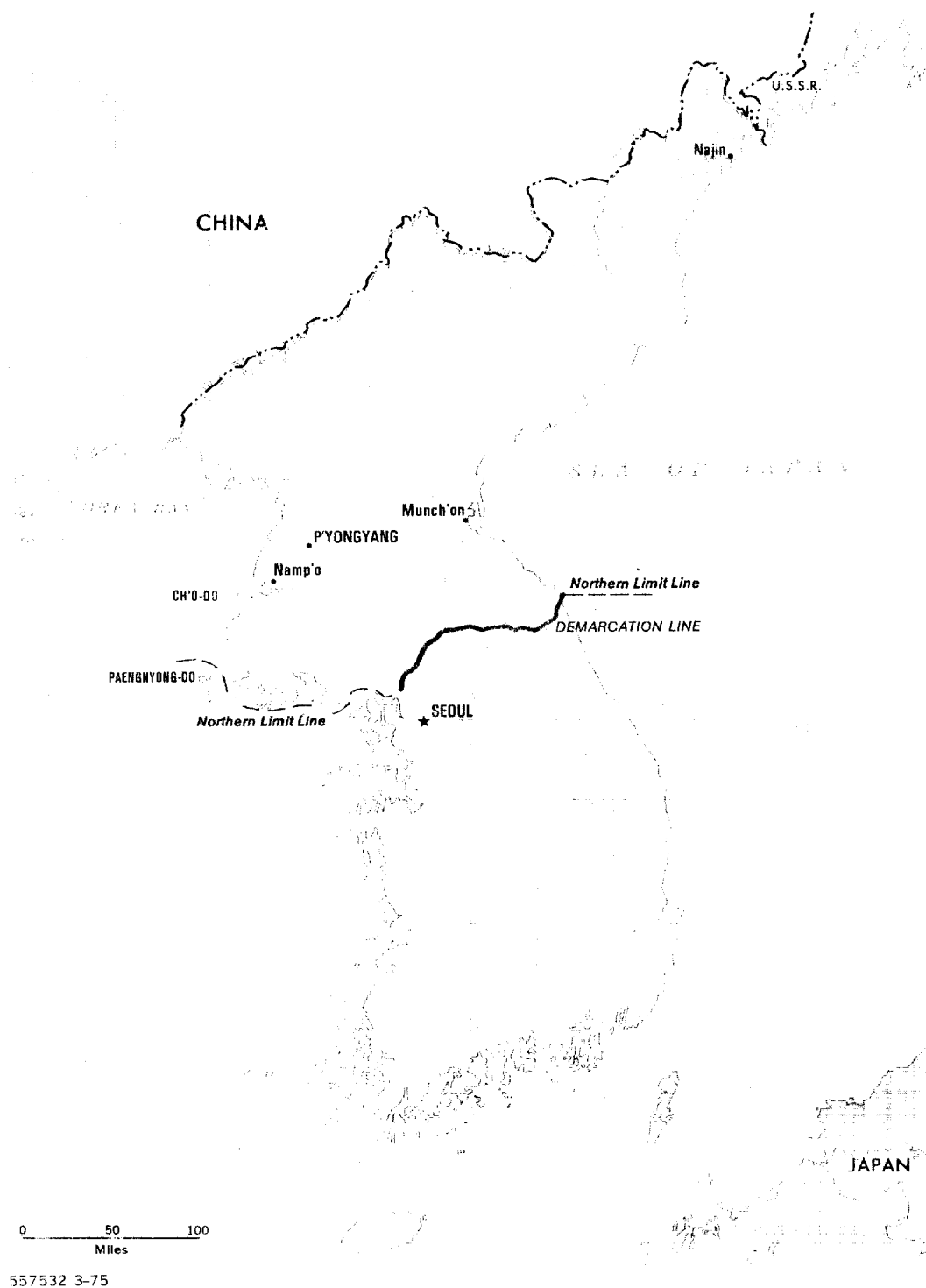
Two other incidents apparently occurred Thursday when, according to Greek Defense Minister Averoff, Turkish aircraft made unauthorized photo flights over several Greek islands. Averoff told the US ambassador he wanted to warn the Turks that the next aircraft flown over a Greek island would be "shot down"; the government decided instead to make oral protests and to forward a memorandum summarizing the details of the unauthorized flights.

Averoff acknowledged the danger involved in firing on a Turkish aircraft, but said Athens would have no alternative if the Turks persisted. The Turks have not responded to the protests, but they have informed the Greeks that a naval exercise in the Aegean has ended.

Last Friday, Turkey circulated an aide-memoire charging the Greeks with a military buildup on the Dodecanese Islands--forbidden under the 1947 peace treaty with Italy. Ankara has been aware of the Greek buildup there, which has been going on since a threatened clash over Aegean oil rights last June. Athens has recently added ten infantry battalions and some artillery to its forces on six islands.

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USSR-CHINA

The Sino-Soviet border negotiations appear to have made no progress since Deputy Foreign Minister Ilichev, the Soviets' chief negotiator, returned to Peking in mid-February. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the major obstacle to progress continues to be the Chinese demand that the USSR remove its forces from those areas designated as disputed by Peking.

Since the talks began in 1969, Peking has insisted that Soviet forces withdraw some distance from several border areas, including a large tract in the Pamir Mountains adjoining southwestern Sinkiang and apparently at least one small tract of land next to northern Manchuria. Moscow has offered to turn over some 450 of the border river islands, but Peking has rejected the offer and contends that both these and other river islands are still part of the disputed territories.

Moscow has consistently rejected this precondition to substantive border negotiations, regarding it as, in General Secretary Brezhnev's words, "absolutely unacceptable." Moscow evidently sees no prospects for progress in the border talks until this condition is removed, or at least drastically modified. In the meantime, the talks continue [REDACTED] on a twice-weekly basis, with both sides exchanging drafts on minor points in contention. [REDACTED]

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